It's not often that we get a look into the processes of governmental thinking and game-planning on urgent matters of foreign policy. Such an opportunity came recently for at least a select group of New Yorkers who attended a benefit sponsored by a time-honored college at a location on Manhattan's upper East Side. A lot of us, kids and grown-ups alike, have heard of and played popular war games - refighting the Battle of the Bulge, defending Leningrad, mixing it up in Star Wars. But this was a real game - out of the here-and-now. A professor of strategy and international relations at the US government's National War College led a quick two-hour simulation session on renewed war in one of today's foremost hotspots - Zimbabwe.

The givens were these: It is late July 1980, Robert Mugabe received 35% of the vote in the February elections and has persuaded small parties to join in forming a government of Zimbabwe. Fighting breaks out around the country, spreads, and the Zimbabwe Defence Force, supported by South Africa, stages a coup against the government of Prime Minister Mugabe and launches savage country-wide attacks on his ZANU supporters. Joshua Nkomo, runner-up in the elections, has conspired with Ian Smith and his white minority. Nkomo proclaims himself interim prime minister and appoints Bishop Abel Muzorewa and a Rhodesian Front member to his cabinet. All the nations of Africa - except South Africa - condemn the coup. President Samora Machel of Mozambique calls an urgent meeting of the Frontline States. Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere urges Washington and London to denounce the coup and to reimpose economic sanctions until the government is restored in Salisbury. In Nigeria, General Olu-segun Obasango warns of a shut-off of oil to any country supporting the rebels. Angry crowds besiege the British High Commission in Lagos; an American cultural official is killed in a provincial Nigerian city. The UN Security Council meets and the Nigerian representative calls on Britain to restore order in its former colony. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher says her country is unable to act without the 'willing compliance' of all parties, and that sanctions are 'under study.' The Soviet and American fleets are on the move. In Havana, Fidel Castro promises aid for the Frontline States and gets it underway.

The question for Americans is in several parts: what are the USA's interests? what objectives should the American government pursue? What actions should Washington take? The New Yorkers, with no preparation and little time, tackled their assignment with elaborate concern about the possible loss of Zimbabwean chrome and Nigerian oil some fretting over the Russians and somewhat more about Cubans, scant attention to the United Nations, none for the Organization of African Unity. Yet they did come up with a hazy policy of non-intervention and of waiting for the dust to settle and deal with the winner. There was virtually no voiced understanding of Pretoria's role and none whatsoever of the deep and abiding thrust of black Africa for self-determination.

This Zimbabwe game was presented as one just completed by a class at the National War College. Documents passed out at the New York session still bore SECRET markings on the covers; it was said the simulation had been declassified for the occasion. The NWC class, after wrestling with this simulation (and a concurrent crisis in the Horn of Africa, omitted from the New York exercise) apparently - after much hawkish argument - came up with pretty much the same response as the New York sophisticates.

The simulation script reveals what one may presume to be the outlook and preconceptions of the more liberal wing of the American government: superficial feelings on aspirations of the African people, a belief that Nkomo and Mugabe cannot work together, a casual recognition of South Africa's intrusion, a calculated assurance that the upheaval can be contained, an implicit trust that a 'moderate' pro-'USA regime will prevail. The public presentation in New York was of course modified from what was engaged in at the National War College. One wonders what exactly was restated in the modification, what options omitted. What, indeed, will the ultimate decision makers do about Zimbabwe in the very near future. The Manhattan session was a sampling of civilian American opinion on an issue surely among the most immediate for the US government. It implanted the idea and the possibility of US involvement in the course of history in Southern Africa - or elsewhere. This and other scenarios will undoubtedly be tried out on other American groups. Keep on the look out. You may be next. Please let ECSA know at once.
Four Americans in Zimbabwe to report on the elections were detained and interrogated by Rhodesian security forces on 17 February. Tilden LeMelle, dean of humanities and arts at New York's Hunter College, George Houser, executive director of the American Committee on Africa, Cynthia Cannady, Washington attorney until recently with the State Department and Michael Shuster, an editor of SOUTHERN AFRICA magazine and Pacifica radio reporter, had been accompanied by members of ZANU to a tribal trust land an hour south of Salisbury. (Ted Lockwood, director of the Washington Office on Africa and a member of the observer team, was not with the group at the time.)

After interviewing several Zimbabweans about intimidation by security forces and auxiliaries of Bishop Abel Muzorewa, the Americans encountered a man who appeared to have been badly beaten. Mike Shuster's dispatch quoted the injured man: 'They came and hit me without fault, without fault. Those soldiers, they hit so many people. An armored truck roared up and a dozen African soldiers armed with machine guns and automatic rifles surrounded the Americans and their Zimbabwean guides shouting: 'We've got the terrorists!'. Professor LeMelle said: 'They looked ready to kill.' The US team was taken to a nearby base camp and questioned by soldiers and police, who explained they were looking for guerrillas. The Americans were not harmed and were eventually released. Correspondent Shuster describes the experience as 'sobering'.

Mike Shuster interviewed ZANU head Robert Mugabe. Here are some excerpts. The first is in reply to a question about a round of boxing. At the end of it he was doing more punching than I. Then the second round. The second meeting. There was more threat and more punching from me, I think I lost the round. But then I gathered information on the auxiliaries and other matters. That strengthened me, and I had a good case against him. So I saw him again. And I think I did a lot of punching. He was a very soft man. I think that was my round. He sounded like a man who was afraid, afraid that things might not go well for him. After all, if we really are forced to start fighting, it cannot reflect well on him. It would be his failure. I had to tell him quite frankly that if he actually banned us from participating in the elections, then there would be no purpose in our upholding the cease-fire. We do not accept that he has any right to ban voters. I thought the whole exercise at Lancaster House was to enfranchise people so that they could vote for a government of their own liking. I asked the question whether this type of banning was the final lesson in democracy that the British had decided to teach us. After you have left, I told him, we can apply it when we feel certain elements in society are not conforming to rules. He was startled. He didn't like that.'

Mr Mugabe commented on his discussions with ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo:

'There have been two meetings between us to discuss our relationship. Our view is that at the end of the elections, the ZANU yield and the ZAPU yield, regardless of the degree of strength each party has attained, should combine so we can constitute an alliance. But he was complaining about the inability of his people to organize rallies and campaigns in areas where we are in control. I told him we had equal difficulty in his areas, but of course his areas are fewer. We talked about the need for us to get closer and to formulate at this stage - so close to the elections - what we want to do at the end of the elections, and to combine in the face of the governor's strategy to divide us. Well Nkomo was happy. He said there was hard feelings on the part of most of his members, but he was going to talk to them. I hope we work out some definite strategy. I cannot see ZAPU aligning itself with Smith after we have worked together. Nor can I in all honesty feel happy at the end of the day that we are working just as ZANU, and constituting a government of ZANU, even if we get a majority. We are duty bound to form an alliance with ZAPU.'

A final question from correspondent Shuster: 'How do you feel about the post-election prospects? Are the white Rhodesians going to turn over the reigns of power?'

Robert Mugabe: 'No, I think there's going to be real resistance from the security forces. And the governor is aiding them by mobilizing them.'

Another US observer team has gone to Zimbabwe - from Freedom House in New York, which also sent observers to last year's elections. Freedom House said about the exercise: 'The country never had so inclusive and free an election. Parties in most developing countries are less free.' Its Trustees called for immediate lifting of sanctions.
Ian Smith, confident that his Rhodesian Front would win all 20 seats reserved for whites in the 100-member Zimbabwe legislature, accepted an invitation to speak in the USA and flew off on the eve of the all-white vote on 14 February. The RF won handily. Smith and his wife, Janet, were enthusiastically welcomed at the biennial convention of something called the Mzuri Safari (Good Trip) held at the Grand Hotel in Reno, Nevada. London's THE DAILY TELEGRAPH said Smith was speaking to a staunchly conservative and well-heeled audience, a group of 500 Americans who go on African safaris and were holding a convention in the gaudy gambling resort...'

The former Rhodesian prime minister stated: 'We have seen democracy provide worse government, not better, more terrorism, not less, more inflation, and a greater breakdown in law and order.' He allowed he could support qualified or responsible democracy. 'We call it meritocracy', i.e., certain qualified individuals could vote. THE TELEGRAPH reported: 'he also called Western democracy an exotic idea that should have been marked "not for export" so far as Africa was concerned'!

UNITA, the group run by Jonas Savimbi which lost the 1975/76 Angolan war, has survived in parts of southern Angola with the benefit of sanctuary and supply from the South Africans in occupation with the help of other friends. Savimbi has travelled abroad extensively building up support with governments who have been, and are, still prepared on the government of the Peoples Republic of Angola. He has just spent five days with business supporters and Conservative politicians in England, a visit under the auspices of Tiny Rowland, chairman of the British multinational LONRH, says THE TIMES of London. Savimbi visited Washington and New York last November. It has been announced that Florence Tate, press secretary to District of Columbia Mayor Marion Barry, is resigning her position to become an American representative for Savimbi and his UNITA.

Savimbi, the London DAILY TELEGRAPH runs a report by Robert Moss, a correspondent who has comfortable ties with ruling circles in Southern Africa minority regimes, saying that 'Western military observers' recently returned from northeastern Angola 'highly optimistic about the military potential of Holden Roberto's FNLA, the other loser in the Angolan war. (Read John Stockwell's IN SEARCH OF ENEMIES to find out what a mess FNLA was. Roberto was the one who brought in those foreign mercenaries, some American, who ran amuck and fell apart as a unit, Roberto's brother-in-law, Zaire's President Mobuto, made him move out of his country.) Moss claims that FNLA 'enjoys unquestioned popular support in the areas it controls' and that the Western observers 'found a high degree of motivation among the FNLA's fighting men' - all they need is retraining, money and modern weaponry to conduct 'an effective guerrilla campaign against the Soviet and Cuban occupation forces' in Angola.

But the real hope for unseating the Angolan government is Savimbi. His projected military upsurge could have wider effects. THE WINDHOEK ADVERTISER reports the imminence of a UNITA offensive and the flight of hundreds of refugees into Namibia from southern Angola. This coincides with other information that Savimbi is preparing to attack provincial towns and cities in mid and lower Angola in an effort to achieve a stronger bargaining position to try to force the Luanda government to deal with him as an equal. Reliable informed sources in Washington affirm that the prime target in Southern Africa of the CIA is the PRA. 'Destabilization' of Angola's government is 'surely the intent of many interests, including Western financial and mining corporations increasingly fretful because the Benguela railroad connecting Zambila and Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba province with the Atlantic is not totally operational; there is a lot of money tied up in Zaire.

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The war for the liberation of Namibia is into its 14th year. Forces of SWAPO's Peoples Liberation Army of Namibia are moving into their occupied country from Angola in greater numbers and deeper into Namibia. Pretoria is constantly reinforcing its 50,000-man South African Defence Force. The intensification of the struggle has brought renewed threats from Pretoria to increase its attacks into Angola and Zambia. Total conflict broods over Southern Africa.
A 25 February missive from the Washington Office on Africa relates Ted Lockwood's report on a ZAPU 15 February press conference in Salisbury. We quote: 'Willie Musarurwa, Secretary for Publicity and Information of the Patriotic Front (ZAPU), called reports of a ZAPU alliance with any parties besides ZANU (PF) 'utter rubbish' He declared that Patriotic Front (ZAPU) and ZANU (PF) were still natural allies. He said that the agreements between them still stand the co-ordinating council and executive council still exist, and there is regular contact between the two parties.'

Americans continue to pour into Southern Africa, to be hosted, boasted at and sold on the wonders and wealth of the Constellation. A 40-person party of Congressmen and their staff visited South Africa and Zimbabwe in early January, Democratic Representative James Wright led some of his group to the Sasol oil-from-coal plant and mirtated: 'Sasol has been an eye-opener to us, and an example which the US should follow....I do not have a moment's hesitation in recommending the buying of Sasol technology,' The Texas congressaman added: 'I have heard a lot of talk about...disinvestment. But I believe it would be good for the US to continue trade with South Africa.'

Another US legislator, James Santini of Nevada, came away reports Johannesburg's STAR, believing 'If South Africa and its mineral riches were to fall into the hands of an adverse power, the entire Western world could be forced to its knees within six months.' Virtually word for word what South African officialdom has been saying. THE CITIZEN of Johannesburg writes of the views - which adds a twist - of the chairman of the parastatal Iron and Steel Corporation (ISCOR), 'Sanctions against South Africa could easily backfire severely against the Western countries imposing them. It is not only this country's enormous supplies of strategic minerals which make sanctions a double-edged sword, but its R2,000 million ($2,4 billion) surplus in the current account that could be utilised in applying an embargo on the West in any emergency situation.' The chairman boasts 'that South Africa can now afford to stop exporting strategic minerals for up to two years'.

You may recall the family squabble last spring when three Americans were kicked out of South Africa for flying our ambassadors plane too close to Pretoria's top secret nuclear installations - with a loaded movie camera in the nose of the aircraft, As is the custom, Washington replied by expelling two South African military attaches, The senior South African was Commodore Willem N. du Plessis. Last month Prime Minister Pieter W. Botha, who is also Defence Minister and National Security Minister, announced that du Plessis had been assigned to the Department of National Security. Doubtless his American sojourn added to the commodore's qualifications. ECSA has been trying to find out for two-and-a-half years now about USA-RSA intelligence cooperation by means of a Freedom of Information request. Our results so far: nothing, contained in lots of letters. A postscript: South African Defence Force chief General Magnus Malan (who received command and general staff training in the USA) released the news that du Plessis had been promoted to rear admiral. PPS: The Department of National Security - once known as the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) - will have yet another name change: to the National Intelligence Service (NIS).

THE RAND DAILY MAIL conducted an interview with the Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, Major General Jannie Roux. Some facts emerged in the 24 December 1979 news story:
- Although the average daily prison population had risen from 95,000 in 1975 to 100,500 at present, total escapes had dropped from 2,339 to 1,859.
- Escapes from the 12 maximum security prisons had dropped from nine in 1976/77 to one in 1978/79.
- Escapes from work gangs dropped from 343 in 1975 to 224 in 1978/79.

The general, pointing out the 2,000 vacancies in his department, stated: 'It must be remembered that more than 500,000 prisoners move through South Africa's 242 prisons each year. (South Africa's population totals about 27 million) The department has a staff of 14,554, of whom only about 7,000 are available for the actual task of guarding prisoners.

He boasted that the Robben Island prison off the coast near Cape Town had never had an escape. But, 'In spite of the natural security offered by an island, it is a very expensive place to imprison people. For this reason the island prison is to be closed and security prisoners there will be moved to Leeukop Prison' (near Pretoria)